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DIRECTORATE OF  
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## *Special Report*

*The International Conference of Communist Parties*

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### THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST PARTIES

Delegates from most of the world's Communist parties are scheduled to assemble next February in Budapest for consultations on a future "world Communist conference." The Soviet party reportedly expects the delegates to agree on a date for the world conference and to appoint commissions to prepare working papers for it. The Soviets have sought repeatedly to reassure doubting parties that the purpose of such a conference would not be to "excommunicate" the Chinese Communist party. Nevertheless, the Budapest meeting will be boycotted by the Chinese and by several other parties which either see in it a tactic to reassert the Soviet claim to leadership among the world's parties or are unwilling to court Chinese wrath.

The ostensible purpose of the world conference will be to seek an agreed position on the united action of Communists against a threatening West. Even this limited goal, however, is rejected by the Yugoslav, Rumanian, and some other parties, which prefer to make their own foreign policy. They doubt that Moscow is willing to abide by its own ground rules and not attempt to extract fealty through a common program carrying the imprint of the pro-Soviet majority.

Even some Soviet leaders appear to doubt the wisdom of aggravating the dispute with the Chinese at a world meeting or elsewhere. Politburo member Aleksandr Shelepin is believed to be an opponent of the course that party boss Leonid Brezhnev is pursuing. The Shelepin position is reported to favor a reassessment of Moscow's China policy with a view toward playing down the Sino-Soviet rift. The prevailing opinion, however, clearly supports Brezhnev.

#### Moscow: The "Soul" of the Communist Universe

Many Russian Communists have never lost their deep emotional conviction that Moscow should be

the leader of the world's Communist parties. As one Soviet official recently put it, although the nature of the world Communist "movement" is changing, one thing is unchangeable: it must have a

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center and a soul, which must be Moscow, or it will not work.

Under Khrushchev, international gatherings replaced the formal Communist international organizations that Lenin and Stalin had established to extend or preserve Soviet authority. The international conferences that Moscow called in 1957 and 1960 were responses to signs of the crumbling of Communist unity and the erosion of Soviet domination. In 1957, ruling Communist parties met, following political upheavals in Poland and Hungary, and called for unity in the bloc with Moscow "at its head." In 1960 delegates to a conference of 81 Communist parties, debated Moscow's and Peking's diverging programs for world revolution, and recognized the Soviet party as the "vanguard" of the entire movement but not as the "head" of the bloc.

Thus, Moscow's present aim is less to reassert its claim to leadership of a "Soviet bloc" of ruling parties, than to create the appearance of a single world-wide Communist "movement." Soviet leaders presumably would argue that failure to achieve some measure of solidarity now could result in the further disintegration of an already divided movement.

#### Opposition to the World Conference

Last month's announcement of a "consultative" meeting scheduled for Budapest next February, ostensibly to discuss another

world Communist conference, was endorsed by only 18 of the 26 parties that comprise the machinery for preparing international party meetings. Of the 26, the seven parties--the Chinese, Albanian, North Vietnamese, North Korean, Japanese, Indonesian, and Rumanian--which refused to attend an earlier preliminary conference in March 1965 were joined on this occasion by the Cuban party. Whereas only 26 parties had been invited in 1965, invitations for the Budapest gathering have been sent to all Communist parties (the latest Soviet count lists 88). Moscow apparently hopes that at least 70 delegations will be present to lend weight to the proceedings. It may be counting also on the last minute support of several fence-sitters.

The number of waverers appears to have decreased during the past year. Most notably, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) has indicated it will participate in all preparations for a world conference. For four years the PCI believed that such a meeting might aggravate the division between Moscow and Peking. It advocated instead "less ambitious" conferences. However, in a recent series of articles on the subject, PCI boss Longo said the PCI's reservations and doubts have since been invalidated by Chinese behavior and that a conference now is timely.

Similarly, the British party in the past has had reservations about a world conference. Last September a British party

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26-PARTY "DRAFTING COMMITTEE"\*

POSITIONS ON CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 1968

Ruling Parties

ENDORSE

Bulgaria  
Czechoslovakia  
German Democratic Republic  
Mongolia  
Hungary  
Poland  
USSR

ABSTAIN

Albania  
China  
Cuba  
North Korea  
North Vietnam  
Rumania

Non-Ruling Parties

Argentina  
Australia  
Brazil  
Finland  
France  
Federal Republic of Germany  
Great Britain  
India  
Italy  
Syria  
United States

Japan  
Indonesia+

+ Inactive since October 1965

\* Prepared the statement adopted by the December 1960 international conference of  
81 Communist parties

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delegation met with Brezhnev, presumably to dissuade him from pursuing his plan for a conference, but instead signed a communiqué agreeing to work for a conference. It insisted, however, on "careful" preparations. This hesitancy seems to have been overcome during party discussions at the time of the 50th anniversary celebrations in Moscow. At the British party congress late in November, Secretary General Gollan rejected criticism that he had neglected international issues by reminding the congress that the British party had now joined in the call for the Budapest conference. Another British Communist leader introduced to the congress on behalf of the executive committee a resolution explicitly condemning the Chinese regime.

It is doubtful, however, that Moscow has been able to overcome the recalcitrance of the Rumanian party. In a Pravda article devoted to the Soviet 50th anniversary, Rumanian party chief Ceausescu paid tribute to Communist unity in general terms but, unlike other East European Communists writing for Pravda, did not endorse a new world conference. The Rumanian press printed a very brief summary of Brezhnev's Moscow speech of 3 November omitting his remarks supporting a world conclave and his censure of the Chinese regime. A recent article in the Rumanian party theoretical journal, moreover, contained a summary of PCI chief Longo's discussion of individual party autonomy. Longo was quoted to the effect that

"possible absences" from an international meeting would not indicate a rupture in solidarity. For its part, Moscow reminded the Rumanians in a recent radiobroadcast that decisions jointly adopted must not be revised unilaterally as the Chinese leadership did with the 1960 conference declaration. The Rumanians will be aware that the declaration upheld the usefulness of international meetings. If Rumania were to go to the Budapest meeting, having failed in advance to endorse it, they would probably argue there that the absence of some parties militates against proceeding toward a fuller conclave.

The Yugoslav party, which is important but not one of the 26 on the preparatory committee, almost certainly will not attend the consultation in Budapest. In unofficial but authoritative commentary on the announcement of the Budapest meeting, recent Yugoslav propaganda has argued that the planners of the conference are following an "outdated" concept in hoping to solve the problems of the Communist movement. It questioned the wisdom of proceeding with the consultative conference in the face of some parties' opposition. It concluded that the 1957 and 1960 international meetings had a disruptive rather than the alleged unifying effect.

Among the other important parties that have opposed the projected conference, the North Vietnamese remain reluctant to antagonize Peking and would avoid participation in any meeting with

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anti-Chinese overtones. Since late 1965, Moscow has been placing heavy emphasis on discussion of the Vietnam war at any future gathering and would like the Vietnamese party to attend the meeting in Budapest. Recent Soviet statements on the forthcoming Budapest meeting and the world party gathering have, however, also put their plans squarely in the context of the 1957 and 1960 assemblies. On this basis, many Far Eastern parties, including the Vietnamese, will find it difficult to participate.

#### Obstacles Within the USSR to a World Conference

Politics play a certain role in the plans of those Soviet leaders having greatest interest in holding a conference. As party secretary general, Brezhnev has become clearly identified with the project. His commitment to the world conference is of long standing. During 1963-64, when Khrushchev was pushing ahead with plans for another world conference, Brezhnev appears to have played a major part in arranging the "preparatory conference" originally scheduled for December 1964, but postponed until March 1965. He has been instrumental in the intensive campaign since last fall.

Brezhnev's advocacy of a world meeting may have encountered opposition from his politburo colleague Shelepin. Shelepin has not always given the impression that he enjoyed being directly associated with Brezh-

nev's handling of world Communist relations. He may be trying to steer clear of involvement while maintaining a policy line diverging from Brezhnev's. Last summer, Shelepin reportedly was behind the call for a review of Moscow's "peaceful coexistence" tactic after the Arabs' debacle.

After dismissing the Moscow party chief, who apparently criticized the leadership on Shelepin's behalf at a central committee meeting in June, Brezhnev moved to undercut the opposition. In his major speech at the November anniversary celebration, he de-emphasized the "peaceful coexistence" concept. Whatever the extent of differences between Brezhnev and Shelepin on the issue of a conference, the decline in Shelepin's political fortunes has been accompanied by increased prestige for Brezhnev and new momentum to his campaign for a world meeting.

#### Immediate Prospects for a World Conference

The Soviets presumably do not expect the Budapest consultations to produce any major results relative to Peking's challenge to Moscow's authority. The probable absence of a number of important parties, together with the apparent concessions Moscow has had to make in format and procedural arrangements, limit its opportunity to influence the outcome of the meeting. In order to hold the conference, the Soviets seem prepared to allow the expression of a considerable range of opinion and the

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resulting discussion will likely be unmanageable. The Soviets could be embarrassed by some independent-minded parties, as they were in March 1965 when the Italian party delegation's vigorous opposition to issuing a call for the world conference resulted in a setback to Soviet hopes.

On the other hand, Moscow will continue to create the impression of increasing momentum on the issue in the hopes of tipping the balance with fence-sitters. They will also probably try to keep alive their plan to inject an anti-Chinese note in the affair while focusing on togetherness against a common "imperialist" foe. Lastly, they will try to get the meeting in Budapest to reach agreement on

a date for the full-scale world conference--possibly by the end of next year--but they may be ready to settle for more "preparations" which would still give the impression of progress toward the ultimate goal.

The Italian party has suggested that non-Communist "progressive and democratic forces" be included in the world conference, apparently to guarantee that it focus on an "anti-imperialist strategy" and not be a forum for ideological disputes. Moscow clearly does not want to dilute the significance of the conference in this way but could conceivably fall back on such a concept if the obstacles to a strictly Communist conclave prove insurmountable.

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